



Washington, D.C. 20505

Executive Registry
81-1918/A

DD/A Registry
81-1624/1

14 SEP 1981

Lloyd S. Etheredge
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Massachusetts Institute of Technology
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Cambridge, MA 02139

DD/A REGISTRY
FILE: Security-4-1

Dear Professor Etheredge:

I read your letter with interest. I appreciate your concerns and believe I understand your convictions. I suspect that our perceptions concerning the mechanics of institutional memories may vary. The extent to which we may differ is probably the result of different professional experiences. I am not certain, for example, that you attribute sufficient weight to the roles which career Government employees play in assisting senior political officials in making policy decisions or the kind of institutional continuity they can provide in any agency such as the CIA.

Regardless of any basic differences we may have in our perceptions in this area, I would like to reassure you concerning your basic concern to ensure that scholars will not be entirely deprived of meaningful access to the classified records of this Agency. Basically, I believe the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) falls short of providing a reliable insight into CIA records of historical significance. This is true because it is not possible to routinely and uniformly declassify all such records on the basis of the passage of time alone. More often the duration of the classification of individual CIA records is dependent on circumstances surrounding the means of acquisition of the information. In brief, continuing classification is frequently necessary to protect CIA's intelligence sources and methods rather than protecting the substance of the records.

The FOIA is, in fact, the source of some real and potential confusion. The segregation of documents required by the FOIA has produced incomplete disclosures of previously classified facts. Occasionally, this has resulted in the publication of unintentional misinformation. The Act does not provide a means of insuring that such incomplete documents will not create an inaccurate or misleading picture of events that have occurred.

Given such circumstances, the FOIA is at best a very uncertain tool for historical research. The Agency's interest in obtaining relief from the FOIA stems from entirely different circumstances. Very simply, the FOIA imposes an obligation upon an agency established to do the secret business of the U.S. Government. The obligation is to search through its various secret records in hopes of finding some nonsecret material. The results are generally predictable. Very little meaningful material becomes available for public release. The Agency is, however, required to commit substantial resources, money and manpower, to the business of searching through old records for the purpose of finding releasable material. The search and review of the material must be done by expert intelligence officers who are capable of recognizing and understanding why information must continue to be protected against public disclosure. Those same officials are the ones responsible for conducting the intelligence activities of this Agency. The result is an enormous expenditure of resources for a comparatively nominal product. At the same time, unmeasurable damage is accruing because of the public perception that CIA is unable to protect its secrets.

Despite the limitations described above, I would not leave you entirely discouraged. The provisions of Executive Order 12065 for approved access to classified records for appropriately cleared historians and scholars is likely to provide a much more satisfying experience for people such as yourself. The Order may shortly be modified, but the provisions for access by scholars set forth in Section 3-4 of the Order, I am confident, will be maintained.

The initial FOIA determinations made concerning the two documents you requested concerning the "Bay of Pigs" are being reviewed again in response to your appeal. The variety and number of factors that must be taken into account in doing such a review make it a time-consuming job. We have many such jobs. We will appreciate your patience.

Thank you for your letter.

Sincerely,



B. R. INMAN
Admiral, U.S. Navy
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

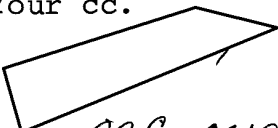
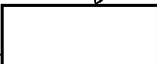

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SUBJECT: Letter to Lloyd Etheredge from Admiral Inman, DDCI,
re the Freedom of Information Act

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TO: DD/A		
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REMARKS:		
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Your cc.		
		
OEC originated it.		
E0/00A		14 SEP 1981
A/00A - interesting response.		
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FORM NO. 241
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

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